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Nurse education: a dying art?

Patrick A. Crookes

University of Wollongong, pcrookes@uow.edu.au

Dame Jill MacLeod Clark

University of Southampton

Kylie Smith

University of Wollongong, kyliesm@uow.edu.au

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Abstract

Workshop abstract.

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Workshop 7

Nurse education – a dying art?

Patrick Crookes, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, University of Wollongong Australia, Wollongong NSW, Australia and Professor Dame Jill MacLeod Clark, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, University of Southampton, Southampton UK

Co authors: Kylie Smith

Abstract:

The role of the nurse educator is coming under increasing scrutiny in both Australia and the UK where there are recognised problems in attracting nurses into teaching careers. This workshop seeks to explore some of these problems and to put forward some considerations for the future. Drawing on research being undertaken in Australia into the history of nursing research, the workshop argues that the problems of attracting quality nurses into research and thus to higher education and academic careers have a long history that is not disconnected from broader social and economic changes.

It is no longer enough to argue simply for more funding, because for many nurses, or trainee nurses, the question is not merely one of salary, although this is a significant barrier given the high salaries and flexible work conditions that a well trained nurse can earn. More fundamental problems exist in the perceptions held about academic life, some of them well founded if we consider the emphasis placed on commodifiable research outcomes in the tertiary sector often at the expense of curriculum or teacher-training development. These are problems that have already been recognised by various education and health bodies in the UK, and significant programs have been put into place which seek to address these issues. The workshop will discuss some of these programs and seek participant's input into their practicality and success to date. In Australia, the situation is in a state of transition, and the workshop organisers are in the process of developing policy suggestions for government to address the rapidly aging nurse educator workforce problem. However, it is already evident that the solution does not lie simply with creating more positions, or raising funding levels.

Rather, there are fundamental underlying principles that need to be examined, such as the relevance of the Nightingale system itself, arguments about the delineation between nurses and doctors, and the importance of curriculum development and improving clinical placement procedures to ensure higher quality education outcomes. Added to this is the recognition of a generational shift in attitude toward careers, and caring professions in particular, that need to be understood in the broader context of modern workplaces, and the construction of modern subjectivities in advanced capitalist societies. The workshop would be useful for participants from all levels of practical, clinical and academic experience. It is expected that workshop

participants will discuss their own experience in the UK system, in both the past and present, which would add to research being conducted in Australia into the history of the RCN in order to develop solutions for the nurse academic workforce issue. Information gathered at this workshop will be used to complement this research to develop policy proposals for government in Australia.

The workshop convener is Prof Patrick Crookes, Dean of the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, and Head of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Indigenous Health at the University of Wollongong in Australia. UOW is the major teaching institution for nurses in regional NSW, and Professor Crookes, who trained as a nurse in the UK, is involved with all aspects of curriculum development and nurse education at the university. Professor Crookes expertise in running this workshop comes from over 20 years of experience in nurse education in the hospital and University sectors, in both Australia and the UK. He has been involved in all areas of these activities: from clinical teaching, to curriculum development and implementation (UG, PG and Research); classroom teaching and lecturing; simulation teaching and research supervision. Patrick has significant experience in running workshops. He has published as an educator and a researcher and has been a member of the International Editorial Team for Nurse Education Today for over 10 years and was the foundation editor of the journal Nurse Education in Practice (with Karen Hoiland). He holds senior and influential positions in nursing. He is currently Head of a significant Australian nursing school (Uni of Wollongong) and has been since 1999. He has also been Dean of a multi-disciplinary Faculty of Health Sciences since 2004, whilst maintaining a publication, research and research supervision load. He has been a member of the executive of the Australian and New Zealand Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery since 2001, this requires being voted on to this committee by Council peers. Professor Crookes is currently Secretary and Deputy Chair of Council and a member of the Global Alliance for Nurse Education and Scholarship (GANES). He was a visiting research fellow at the University of Sheffield from 2000 to 2005 and has an international profile as a nurse and academic.